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The Nature and Excellency of the Duty of  
*Alms-giving.*

A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the Parish Church  
Of *St. Giles's in the Fields.*

*Sunday* Nov. 17th, 1706.

O N

Behalf of the Charity-Schools settled in that  
Parish, consisting of Eighty Five Boys, and  
one Hundred Girls.

By Sir *WILLIAM AWES*,  
Baronet, D. D. and Chaplain in  
Ordinary to Her Majesty.

Publish'd at the request of the Trustees for  
the said Charity-Schools, and others of  
the Hearers.

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L O N D O N:

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1 Tim. VI. 18, 19.

*That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.*

*Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation, against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*

THESE words are part of that Charge which St. Paul commands Timothy, in the verse immediately preceding my text, to lay upon *them that are rich in this world*. And they do both, fully and emphatically teach such their duty of *Beneficence* or *Charity* towards their poor indigent brethren, and most pathetically and powerfully *invite* and *stir* them up to the *practice* of it. Their *Duty* cannot possibly be set forth in fuller terms, than those the Text; *That they do good*, a very large expression, and which comprehends under it all those various ways, by which they may be helpful and serviceable, either to the *Souls* or *Bodies*, the *temporal* or *eternal* Interests of their Brethren. *That they be rich in good works*, not only do an act of *Charity* now and then, but constantly embrace all opportunities of doing such acts, to which their capacities will extend; and, by this means, become as rich in the *exercise*, as God has made them in the *power*, of *doing good*. And lastly, that they be *ready to distribute, and willing to communicate*, that is in other words, that they do, *plentifully* in proportion to their worldly circumstances, and *cheerfully* without the least grudging or reluctance, contribute towards the relief of their distressed brethren. And then the *invitation* or *motive* to this duty, is certainly the greatest that can possibly be propos'd, even the promise of everlasting happiness and glory: *Laying up in store*, or treasuring up *for themselves, a good foundation, stock or pledge against the future, that they may lay hold on eternal life*. Which words, I think, do likewise fairly intimate to us, what ought to be our *principal end*, in *doing good*, with respect to our selves; namely, the obtaining, not the favour or applause of Men, or any other such worldly advantages, but advantages of a much higher and more *spiritual*



ritual nature, such as the favour of God and our Blessed Saviour, and through that, the hope of eternal happiness in another life.

The Duty of *doing good* in general is so large a subject, that it would be impossible for me to do it any tolerable justice, within the limits of so short a discourse, as I must now be confin'd to. And therefore I shall single out for my present Subject, that particular instance of *doing good*, mention'd in my Text, *the distributing and communicating* of our worldly goods, or *giving Alms*, to our poor brethren; this being an instance of *Charity* very proper to our present occasion, such as of all others Men have most need to be put in mind of (for that *Charity* which is most *costly*, is always most *neglected*) and yet, at the same time, such as is one of the surest *signs* and *proofs* of our being *true Christians*, such as our Blessed Lord has in a most *especial* and *extraordinary* manner recommended to us in *Scripture*, 1 John 3. 18. 19. Luke 11. 41, 12. 33. Mat. 25. 35, 36, &c. and such as he himself has assur'd us, he will at the great day of Judgment lay the most *particular* weight and stress upon.

But before I proceed to treat of this Duty, I think it needful to premise, that altho' in the charge here given by the *Apostle*, the *rich* only are mention'd, yet Men of *all ranks and circumstances*, (the very *meanest* only, who are so *poor* themselves as to be under an *absolute* incapacity of giving *Alms*, excepted) are concern'd in it. For, as the obligations from *Nature* and *Reason*, to this Duty, do as strongly bind those of *moderate* and *mean* fortunes, in proportion to their abilities, as those of *plentiful* and *great ones*: so do the *Scriptures* as well command those of a *low* condition, Ephes. 4. 28. *to work with their hands, that they may have to give to him that needeth*, as the *rich* to be *ready to distribute, and willing to communicate, out of their abundance*. Luke 21. 1, 2, 3. Mark 12. 41. And we find there, that neither did the *poor Widdow* think her self excus'd from giving, tho' her whole substance was but *two mites*, but freely gave it all to *pious* and *charitable* uses; nor did the *deep poverty* of the *Macedonians* hinder them from ministering to the necessities of their *poor* brethren: but *to their power, yea*

and beyond their power, did the riches of their Liberality abound. So that I would not be thought to be speaking to the rich only, tho' indeed principally to them, while I am pressing this duty of *Alms-giving*; but my design is, to exhort all Men to be merciful, after their power. If they have much, to give plenteously. If they have little, yet still to do their diligence gladly to give of that little: well knowing that by so doing, they shall all gather themselves a good reward in the day of necessity. Tob. 6. 8, 9.

This being premis'd, I shall now proceed (in order to make my Discourse as useful as I can, both with respect to the Subject which I am to treat of, and the Occasion which call'd me hither to treat of it) in the following method.

First, I will endeavour to shew wherein the true nature of this Duty of *Alms-giving* consists; and in what manner it may best be performed by us.

Secondly, I will briefly lay before you the various and most powerful motives that there are, to invite us to the practice of this Duty. And

Lastly, Represent to you the excellency of that particular Charity, which I am this Day to intreat your *Alms* for.

1st. I am to show wherein the true nature of this Duty of *Alms-giving* consists; and in what manner it may best be perform'd by us. Now *Alms-giving* is generally divided, by those that treat of it, into *Spiritual* and *Corporal*: *Spiritual*, which consists in instructing the ignorant, advising the doubtful and perplex'd, comforting the afflicted, censuring such as do amiss, pardoning those that have offended us, supporting the weak, praying generally for all Men, &c. *Corporal*, which consists in feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, lodging strangers, visiting the sick, redeeming captives, burying the dead, and all other charitable offices of the like nature. But, as for the first branch of this division, viz. *Spiritual Alms-giving*, I look upon it to have the name of *Alms-giving* only figuratively and by way of Analogy, and that, strictly speaking, *Alms-giving* always signifieth, both in Scripture Language and our common usage of the word,



word, *the giving some part of our worldly goods to those that are in want.* At least, it is plain that it is this sort of *Alms-giving*, which St. Paul had respect to in my *Text*, and which I shall therefore *solely* insist upon at present.

And this *Alms-giving*, consider'd as it is a *Christian* duty, may be properly enough defin'd to be, *A free and willing communication or distribution of some part of our worldly goods, to our poor Brethren, for the relief and supply of their wants, whither of Soul or Body; and this too, upon the true principles of the Gospel.* For your better understanding of which definition, and showing you the *justness* of it, I must beg leave to explain my self, as to the several parts of it, in the following particulars.

*First* then, when I say that *Alms-giving* is a communication or distribution of *our* worldly goods. I mean of such goods only, as are truly and properly *our own*. For he, who gives away the goods of another; is so far from doing an act of *Charity*, which will render him *acceptable* to God, that he plainly doth an act of *Injustice*, for which he must expect to be *Punish'd* by him. And consequently he, who gives to the poor only his ill gotten goods, the fruits of his oppression and violence, fraud and couzenage, &c. cannot be truly said to give an *Alms*; because, in doing this, he either gives to the poor that, which ought to be *restor'd* to those from whom he has wrongfully taken it, if it be in his power to find them out, and so is guilty of *Injustice*: or otherwise, he gives to the poor no more than is due to them, as God's *Receivers* of that which, for want of a possibility of finding out the true owners, he cannot return to them, and so at best he doth but an act of *Religion*. As little can he deserve the name of an *Alms-giver*, who gives to the poor that, which he knows himself certainly to be *indebted* to another person: nay, or which he has reason to believe, all accompts being fairly stated between him and others, is not *his own*, but *theirs*. This is manifest and palpable *injustice*: and it is an establish'd Rule in Divinity, that *Justice* must be done, before we can have any room for *Charity*. And accordingly Divines explain

the τὰ ἐνόντα, which we translate *such ahings as we have*, Luke 11. 41. vid. Poli: Synop. in locum, and which our Saviour commands us to give *Alms of*, to be such goods as remain to us clear, after full *restitution* made and *justice* done to all such, as we have *wrong'd* or stand *indebted* to.

*Secondly*, I say it must be a *free* and *willing* distribution: because *Alms-giving* is a *Religious* act, and every *Religious* act, consider'd as such, must come from the *heart*, and have the full consent of the whole *will* and *affections* along with it; otherwise it will never be *pleasing* in Gods sight, as he himself has frequently declar'd in *Scripture*, Exod. 25. 2. 35. 5. Prov. 23. 26. Isai. 29. 13. 14. And for this reason I fear that we often give to the poor, what cannot properly be call'd *Alms*: as, when we pay our *Parish Rates* for them, only because the *Law* has commanded it, but with all the *unwillingness* and *reluctancy* imaginable: much more when, as is but too commonly seen, we use all manner of *indirect* and *trickish* means, to avoid paying even a *just* and *neighbourly* proportion towards these *Rates*. Surely that which is thus squeeze'd out of us, whither he will or no, is not *giving as a man is dispos'd in his own heart*, but giving *grudgingly*, and *of necessity*, and consequently such giving as God has aforehand declar'd, he will not be *pleas'd* with, 2 Cor. 9. 7.

*Thirdly*, I say *our worldly goods* in general; because not only our *money*, but our *meat*, our *drink*, our *clothing*, our *lodging*, Prov. 3. 9. and in fine, whatever part of our *worldly substance* our poor brother is *sustain'd* and *comforted* by us with, have always been reputed to deserve the name of *Alms*, Nehem. 8. 11. And I say *some part* of our wordly goods only, because there is no case, in which we are bound to give the whole: but we may always reserve enough for the *necessary* sustenance of our *selves* and *families*. There may indeed happen *extraordinary* cases, such as those of *famine*, *extreme persecution*, &c. Acts 11. 29. Acts 4. 37. in which we may be oblig'd, as the first Christians thought themselves, not only to give according to our utmost abilities, with respect to the *profit* or *income* of our estates, but even to part with some of the *principal*, nay to *sell the whole*, Luke 12. 33. as they did, and divide



divide amongst others what, most strictly speaking, is not *necessary* for the *support* of *our selves* and *our families*. But beyond this no man can be oblig'd to go: and that, for this plain reason, because we are no where oblig'd to love others *better than*, but only *as our selves*.

*Fourthly*, I say to our *poor brethren*, for the *relief* and *supply* of *their wants*: because whatever is given by us to those, whom we have not sufficient reason to believe to be really *poor* (I do not mean only *poor*, so as to want *necessaries*, but so as to want wherewith to subsist with tolerable *ease*, *conveniency* and *comfort*) may be call'd by the name of *liberality*, or *generosity*, or *friendship*, but can, in no propriety of Speech, be call'd *Alms*. Nay, and tho' we give to those whom we know to be really *poor*, but yet do not give for this end, *the relief* of *their wants*, but for some *worldly end* or *Interest* of our own; this will never pass in the sight of God, who chiefly minds the *intention* in every action, for *Charity* to the poor. Nay farther yet, if we give to those, who, we have reason to believe, at the time of our giving to them, will not apply what we give to the end for which we design'd it, *the relief* and *supply* of *their wants*, but make it minister to their *vices*, and spend it upon their *lusts*: this will be so far from being true *Alms*, a great *Christian virtue*, that it will be in some sort an abetting and encourageing of Sin, which is a most *Un-Christian Crime*. And therefore it stands us instead to be very careful, either not to give to such people *at all*; or at least, if their wants be *very great*, to give to them in such a *manner* and *measure*, that we may be satisfied that what we give shall be apply'd to the *relief* of their *necessities*, not the *feeding* of their *vices*.

I add *whither* of *Soul* or *Body*; because the *Souls* as well as *Bodies* of our Brethren, are capable of being benighted by this sort of *Alms*. As is seen in the redemption of Captives out of the hands of *Infidels*, and thereby rescuing them from the temptations, which they were expos'd to, of *dissembling* or *renouncing* their most *Holy Faith*; eating persons in exceeding strait and difficult circumstances; and, by so doing, preventing their falling into the Sins of *Lying*, *Perjury*, *Theft*, *Uncleanneſs*, nay and perhaps *Self-murder*, which they might otherwise probably enough have been drawn by the Devil to, &c. And indeed then our *Alms* seem to have attain'd a great degree of perfection, when they are thus made *doubly* serviceable, to the *Souls*, and to the *Bodies* of Men.

*Lastly*, I say all this must be done upon the principles of the Gospel:

because, whatever other virtue there might be in our Alms-giving, *without this*: it can never be look'd upon as a *Christian Duty*; for all *Christian Duties* must be perform'd upon *Christian Principles*. Now the principles, upon which the Gospel recommends this Duty of *Alms-giving* to us, are such as these; a love of, and regard to the commands, examples and honour of *God*, and our Blessed *Saviour*; a desire of doing good to the *Bodies*, but especially the *Souls*, of our poor Brethren, vid. St. Johns Epistles throughout. And an earnest hope and expectation of those *Spiritual* benefits and advantages, which may probably accrue to our selves, from our performing this Duty, as we ought to do. These must be the chief and principal ends aim'd at by us, in our *Alms*; or else, tho' we give *all our goods to feed the poor, it will profit us nothing*, 1 Cor. 13. 3.

I do not say that the consideration of those *worldly* advantages, which our *Alms* are likely to procure for us, may not be a motive and encouragement to us to give *Alms*; undoubtedly it may, or it would never have been propos'd as such in *Scripture*. But then it must be a motive, in its proper *place*, and *order*, after those infinitely more *noble* and *weighty* once before mentioned.

And thus I hope, I have sufficiently both explain'd and vindicated my definition of *Alms-giving*, consider'd as it is a *Christian Duty*. I am to proceed in the next place to show you, in *what manner this Duty may be best perform'd by us*. And, in order to this, be pleas'd to observe the following *Rules*.

*First*, to *Dispense your Alms, with Judgment and Discretion*: Discretion I mean both as to the *choice* and *preference* of the *fittest* and *propereest* objects of them; and the due *proportioning*, *sorting* and *timing* of them.

I have already told you, that it is *Essential* to *Alms-giving*, that we give to such as we have reason to believe are really *poor*, and will rightly apply what we give them, to the *relief* of their *poverty*. And such every private Christian may easily find out, if he doth but heartily *search* for them, as he ought to do. Or at least, if he cannot by *himself* yet, he may by advising with *others*, more especially his *Spiritual Guide*; whose advise and direction, in this case, if he be but careful to follow, he acts, in this respect, as becomes a sincerely good and wise Christian, and what ever the success be, what he thus gives will certainly be plac'd by God, to his account, as true *Alms*.

But this is not all; It is not enough that we give to those that are really poor, but both *Reason* and *Religion* require, that we make a distinction amongst these, and according to the merits of their respective circumstances, prefer one of them to another. A Man who is in extreme want, and just ready to perish, let his other circumstances be what they will, is to be relieved before any other person, that is not so; both because *Life* is the *dearest*, and most *valuable* of all *earthly* blessings, and consequently ought first to be taken care of, and because the sustaining of this is absolutely necessary, even in order to have it in our power to do good to the *Souls* of Men. An *Alms*, by which our brother is like to receive any *Spiritual*



ritual benefit, is to be preferr'd before one, that will only bring him a *Corporal* one; and one, that will bring him both *Spiritual* and *Corporal*, before one, that will bring him but one of these. Generally speaking, a *very poor Man* is to be reliev'd, before one *moderately poor*: a *good Man*, before a *bad Man*: a *Fellow Christian*, before an *Infidel*: Galat. 6. 10. a *Parent, Relation, Friend, Benefactor, Neighbour or Companion*, before a *Stranger*: 1 Tim. 5. 8. a *Gentleman or Person of fashion* fall'n to decay, before such as have been *born and bred in poverty*: an *honest and industrious Housekeeper*, before an *Idle Vagrant Beggar*; 2 Thes. 3. 10. one that *Providence* has brought to a low condition, before one that his *own Vices* have brought so, &c. These and such like are distinctions founded in the very *Nature and Reason* of things, and give a *Right* to the *poor*, to demand proportionable distinctions in the distribution of our *Alms*. And consequently we cannot, without the greatest *unreasonableness and absurdity*, and without manifest *Injustice* to the *poor* themselves, overlook such distinctions as these.

And much the same may be said, as to the *proportioning* of our *Alms*. Sometimes, by feeding the *poor* only from *hand to mouth*, and giving them but *little* at a time, we keep those continually *poor*, who, by a large sum at first, might have been set up in the world, and put in a condition of living comfortably *ever after*. At other times, the *profuseness* of our *Alms* ministers to *Idleness, Wantonness, Intemperance* and other vices. Now, to prevent the mischiefs arising from these two *extremes*, we shall do well to consider before hand the *circumstances, tempers and qualifications* of the persons, who are to be reliev'd by us; and then to parcel out our *Alms* to them in such quantities, as may be likely to do them the *most*, and the *most lasting* good. Always taking this caution along with us, that except in very *extraordinary* cases indeed, we must never give so much at one time, as to leave our selves nothing more to give. For *Charity* is to be the work of our whole lives: and it will be a very uneasy thing to a good man, to see the most moving Objects continually before his eyes, and not to have it in his power to assist and relieve them.

Next, as to the *sorting* of our *Alms*, we know by daily experience, that not always *money*, but sometimes *meat and drink*, sometimes *clothing*, sometime *physick*, sometimes a *stock* for work or trade; sometimes *employing* them in our own *business*, is the *properest* and *best* *Charity* to the *poor*; falls in best with their *present* wants; or provides best for their *future* well being, as need most requires. And therefore these are things well worth our thinking on, in the distribution of our *Alms*.

And then, as to the *timing* of our *Alms*, or giving them in due season, this is a mighty beneficial circumstance of them, both with respect to those who *receive*, and our selves who *give* them. The *Receiver* is hereby preserv'd from greater mischiefs, nay often from utter ruine and destruction, which might otherwise have ensu'd; and has therefore a *double* joy, *present* relief, and hope of *future* ease, from our *Alms*. The *Giver*, besides the unspeakable pleasure  
of

Of so seasonably relieving his poor brother, doth hereby become a good Husband of his Alms; Prov. 3. 27. 28. and doth that for a little, which, if it had been delay'd any time, must perhaps, have cost him ten times as much.

Thus much will Discretion do, towards the making the utmost of our Alms; it will dispose of them to those, who have the most just and equitable Title to them: it will render them most effectual for the ends, for which we design them: and yet both spread them as wide, and make them last as long, as can reasonably be expected.

Secondly, Another Rule shall be, To give as much as we can conveniently spare, in our own lives time; and generally with our own hands too, Besides, that the giving away part of our worldly goods, while we are alive, and in health, and capable of enjoying them our selves, is a much surer proof of our love to God and our Neighbour; and consequently a much greater satisfaction to our own minds, than the giving them, when we can have no farther use and enjoyment of them; besides this, I say, this is the surest way to have our Alms obtain the end, for which we give them; and which they but too often fail of, when left to the management of Executors, Trustees, &c.

And then, as to giving with our own hands: this is not onely the securest way of conveying to the poor, what we design for them, but likewise carryeth with it a very commendable appearance of tenderness and regard for them: and, which is most of all, will naturally lead us to be acquainted with them, to inquire into their true state and condition, to see the miseries which they are expos'd to, perfectly to understand their wants, and the best ways of relieving them: and by these means, bring us to a true sense and fellow-feeling of, a true concern and compassion for, all their grievances and necessities. And this will most excellently prepare us for another qualification of a true Christian Alms-giver, which is

Thirdly, To give cheerfully and liberally. I put both these together, because one is ordinarily the effect of the other. What we do with a pleas'd mind, we generally do with a liberal hand, Rom. 12. 8. God has expressly told us that he will have mercy shown with cheerfulness, and that he loveth a cheerful giver, 2 Cor. 9. 7. He has commanded us frequently, to open our hands wide to the poor and needy in the land, Deut. 15. 8. 11. and to be merciful as he himself is merciful, Jam. 1. 5. who giveth liberally, giveth even all things richly to enjoy, 1 Tim. 6. 17. And indeed it is hardly to be conceiv'd, that a Man can love his Brother as he ought to do, and yet not delight to relieve, ease and comfort him, as occasion requires, and most readily part with, what is abundantly sufficient for this purpose.

What proportion of our worldly goods it becomes us to set apart, for charitable uses, it is not possible nicely to determine; by reason of the infinite variety of Mens circumstances, which may make it more reasonable for one Man to give a Fifth part, than another a Twentieth. But thus much I cannot help observing. First, that most of us might give a great deal more than we do, and, either from our vices or vanities, our superfluities, or at least needless expences, pare off



off abundance, for the relief of our poor brethren. *Secondly*, that as far as we can learn from *Scripture*, the proportion of our Estates set apart for these uses, ought to be very great. God himself set it very *high* to his own people the *Jews*, *Exod.* 23. 4. *Deut.* 14. 28. 29. and the examples of good men and women, mention'd upon this account in *Scripture*, carry it yet *higher*. *Dorcas*, we read, was full of good works and *Alms-deeds* which she did, *Acts* 9. 36. *Cornelius* gave much *Alms*, *Acts* 10. 12. *Zaccheus*, tho' a *Publican*, gave half of his goods to the poor, *Luke* 19. 8. and the first *Christians* sold all their possessions, and divided the price to every one as he had need.

*Fourthly*, we must give with modesty, humility, and all convenient privacy. Our Blessed Lord abhorr'd nothing more, in mens *Alms-giving*, than pride and ostentation; and therefore he particularly caution'd us against these, and declar'd that they would hinder our *Alms* from being accepted by God. And indeed there are no two things, in their own natures, more inconsistent than *Alms-giving* and *Pride*; the one naturally tending to humble us, by putting us in mind of the mean, and poor, and insufficient condition of mankind, in this life, without the Divine favour and assistance: the other tending to puff us up, as if we had something of our own, abstracted from God, which was really praise worthy, and fit for us to please our selves with, and make our boasts of.

And, that we may lye under as little temptation as possible, to pride and vain glory, in the giving of our *Alms*, we are commanded to give them with all convenient privacy, *Mat.* 6. 1. I say all convenient privacy, because there may be times, when privacy is not convenient. When the exemplariness of our *Alms* happens to be needful, for the setting forth of God's Glory, and the provoking one another to love and good works, then privacy would be a fault. *Heb.* 10. 24. Then we are commanded to let our light shine before men: *Matt.* 5. 16. but even then we must be careful to the utmost, not to be too much pleas'd with, or conceited of, the brightness of it, our selves.

*Lastly*, We must distribute our *Alms*, with all imaginable tenderness, compassion and kind regard, to our poor brother. We must give so, as not to leave the least umbrage for his suspecting, that we any way despise or reproach him, for his poverty. So, as we would wish others to give, if we our selves were to be the receivers: so, as becomes men that are sensible that it is God that hath made this difference between us and our poor brethren, and may alter it by putting them into our condition, and us into theirs, when he pleaseth. *1 Sam.* 2. 7. He, who doth not this, but the contrary, is uncharitable even in his Charity, and instead of relieving and comforting, grieves and provokes his poor Brother, who has already but too great a weight of affliction upon him. And this, as it is a certain sign of a base and abject Spirit, so will it fare with us accordingly. It will prevent all our poor brothers thanksgivings to God, *2 Cor.* 9. 12. on our behalf, which would have been no small advantage to us; it will be construed by God himself, as a reproaching of him: *Prov.* 17. 5. it will deprive us of all that inward joy and satisfaction, which

which we might otherwise have had in our *Alms* here: and instead of *rewards*, it will treasure up for us most dreadful *punishments* hereafter.

And thus I have fully instructed you, both in the *nature* of this duty of *Alms-giving*, and the *best manner* of performing it. And now what would I give, that it were but as easy to *engage* you to the *habitual practice* of it, as it is to *instruct* you in it. And yet certainly this can be no very hard matter, if we consider

*Secondly*, the *various* and most *powerful* motives that there are, to invite us to the *practice* of this Duty. But *where* shall I *begin*, or *when end*, upon this head?

Shall I put you in mind of the *plain* and *manifold* obligations, which you lie under to this duty, from *Nature*, *Reason* and *Revelation*? Shall I send you to the *Old* and *New Testament*, to see how *particular* a value God and our *Blessed Saviour* put upon this duty, preferring it even to the duties more *immediately* belonging to *themselves*? Shall I tell you, that this is the *distinguishing* badge of our *Christian Profession*; and that, without this, no other *Christian* graces or virtues, not even the *supernatural* ones of the Spirit, will *profit us any thing*? Hosea 6. 6. Mat. 12. 7. 1 Cor. 13. 3.

Shall I show you how *many* particular graces and virtues this one of *Alms-giving* includes in it, and those too the *brightest* and most *difficult* to be obtain'd of any, in the whole System of Christianity? Such as, the loving God above all things, and our *Neighbours* as our selves: an *indifferency* for the things of *this World*, and a *readiness* of faith to *exchange* them, for the *invisible* ones of the other: a resolution to *obey* and *please* God, whatever present *self-denial* and *mortification* it may cost us: and a firm *trust* and *dependance* upon him, that he will become our *exceeding great reward* for so doing.

Shall I propose to you the *examples* of the *Holy Angels*; who are continually *ministering* for our good? Of the *Son of God*, who made it the whole business of his life here upon Earth, to go about *doing good*, Heb. 1. 14. and thought it *more blessed* to give than to receive, Acts 10. 38. 20, 35. Of God himself, the *Author* and *Giver* of every good gift, Jam. 1. 17. the *Father of Mercies*, and God of all Comfort, who at first *created us*, and has been ever since *sustaining* and *preserving* us, through each moment of our lives, Acts 17. 28. And shall I need to observe to you, that we never do our selves so much *true honour*, as when we endeavour to *copy* after these *great* and *perfect* examples, and by so doing, become in some sense, *Gods* to our Brethren.

Shall I call to your remembrance the *pleasure* that attends the performance of this duty? what a *natural* gratification it is to our *own bowels*, Prov. 11. 17. how perfectly agreeable to our *Reason*: how exactly answerable to the true Spirit and Temper of our *Religion*: and consequently what *inward peace* and *joy* it must needs fill our *Consciences* with.

Shall I attempt to reckon up the many *worldly* advantages, that flow from it? how it will make *us* and *ours* *belov'd* and *esteem'd* by all



all men: gain us a mighty name and reputation in the world, and that too such an one as shall endure when we are dead and gone, through many generations: be a steady security and protection to us, against all dangers, both in private and publick changes and revolutions: help us to enjoy what we have, with the better relish: make it both spend and hold well: be a very likely means of encreasing it, and the surest way of entailing it, even to our Childrens Children. For so saith the Scripture, and our experience generally confirms the same. That the merciful man is never forsaken, nor his Seed forced to beg their bread, that he shall be in everlasting remembrance, and his horn shall be exalted with honour, that he shall either be taken away from the evil to come, or, let what will happen, he shall not be mov'd, or be afraid of evil tidings, but he shall see his desire upon his enemies, and even in the days of famine he shall be satisfied. He shall eat his meat with gladness and singleness of heart: wealth and riches shall be in his house, his seed shall be mighty upon earth, and his inheritance shall be for ever, Ps. 112. Ps. 37. Acts 2. 45. 46.

Or rather, shall I endeavour to win you to the practice of this duty, by promises of Spiritual blessings? by assuring you that the Alms are an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to God, Philip. 4. 2. 16. that your blessed Lord will vouchsafe to accept of them, as kindneses done unto himself, Matt. 25. 40. that they will make way for your prayers to the throne of grace, Acts 10. 4. that they shall help to cover a multitude of your Sins, of your smaller and more excusable Sins, 1 Pet. 4. 6. that hereby ye may know your selves to be of the truth, and assure your hearts before God, Pro. 10. 12. that the remembrance of these will be a sure comfort to you, when you shall most need comfort, upon your sick and dying beds, 1 John 3. 19. nay farther, that these shall follow you even beyond the grave, and become powerful Advocates for you, at the day of Judgment, Ps. 41. 3. And tho' no man shall be then sav'd, for the sake of any single grace or virtue, Revel. 14. 13. yet it seems very plain (from our Lords insisting so particularly upon this of bounty to the poor, Matt. 25. 34. and seeming to make it the greatest upon which our everlasting sentence is to turn, as he doth in his description of the day of Judgment) that more regard shall be had, more favour shewn, to this grace or virtue singly, than to any other.

Oh! how delightfull would it be, to dwell upon the contemplation of these glorious things, and to raise our selves up with it, into that Angelical, that Divine frame and temper of mind, a love and desire above all things, to be continually employ'd in doing good. But the time will not allow me to insist any longer upon this, at present. However I am satisfied that I have mention'd, tho' but barely mention'd, all these motives; not doubting in the least, but that, in this vast variety, one or other of them has so effectually touch'd, soften'd and open'd, the hearts of every one of you, that I need not beg your patience, or fear your attention, while I am going on.

Lastly, to represent to you the excellency of that particular Charity, which I am this day to intreat your Alms for; and that is,

*the maintaining of Schools, for the Religious and Useful Education of poor Children, both Boys and Girls.* The excellency I say, for (besides that this is undoubtedly a true Charity, bestow'd upon those who are really poor, and faithfully apply'd to the ends for which it is given) it has the farther happiness to be attended with many such peculiarly advantageous circumstances, as make it *preferable* to most other Charities. As

*First*, It is a Charity of the best kind: a double Charity as I before call'd it, which doth good both to the *Souls* and *Bodies* on whom we bestow it. It not onely provides *convenient raiment* for them, and breeds them up in the most likely way of getting a *comfortable subsistence* in this World (tho' these are very great and valuable Blessings, such as, it is to be fear'd, great part of mankind, not to say the greatest, make their principal aim and end) but, which is infinitely more valuable, it throughly informs their minds, in the knowledge and understanding of the most *useful* and *necessary* principles of their most *Holy Religion*: it teaches them early to *subdue* and *govern* their *passions* and *disorderly* appetites and affections: it keeps them out of the way of all manner of *temptations* to *evil*; and trains them up, so *carefully* and *constantly*, in the sure paths to *piety* and *peace*, and *eternal happiness*; that we have all the reason in the world to hope, that *when they are old they will not depart from them*, Prov. 22. 6. but be evermore reaping the blessed fruits of our Charity, *to all eternity*: So that *this* Charity doth all, that Charity possibly can do: it takes care of the *whole Man* both *Body* and *Soul*, and soweth sure seeds of *present* and *future* happiness, even *for ever and ever*.

*Secondly*, This is a Charity, the good effects of which, will be of a *most diffusive* and *lasting* nature. Not only these *poor Children* themselves, and the *Parents*, *Relations* and *Friends* of them (to whom it must needs be a matter of an unspeakable joy and comfort, to be eas'd of the charge and trouble of their Education, and to see them put into a very likely way of becoming happy both here and hereafter: nay, and perhaps of assisting and supporting them in their Old Age, if there shall be occasion) but every *Master*, every *Family*, every *Parish*, every *Town*, every *Kingdom*, to whom these poor Children shall hereafter become *serviceable* and *useful*, will have reason to call those *Blessed*, who, by their Charity, have been the main *Instruments* of their becoming so. And that too so much the more; because generally, before the settlement of these *Charity Schools*, the Education of the *Children* of the *Poor* was very much *neglected*, and they were so far from being likely to do any Good in their Generation, that they were the very *burden* and *plague* of Society: given to *Idleness*, *Beggary*, *Swearing*, *Theft*, *Lewdness*, *Violence*, *Murther*, and every *evil work*.

And then, as to the *lastingness* of the good effects of this Charity: besides that they will probably hold the *poor Children* themselves, as long as they live (it being no very easie matter to break loose from the restraint and power of a *Vertuous* and *Religious* Education) besides this, I say, it seems highly probable that they being themselves

truly



truly sensible of the great and manifold advantages of such an Education, will make it their utmost care to give their Children the same: and so on, till all future generations shall in some measure at least, partake of the *benefits of this Charity*.

*Thirdly*, This is a Charity which doth most immediately aim at, and will very much contribute to, the honour of God and our blessed Saviour, and the reforming of mankind, and establishing a true sense and practice of Religion amongst us. I have but just observ'd to you, how devoid of all true sense of God and Religion, how dissolute in their manners, how extreamly vicious in all their practices, the Children of the poor have generally been, for want of a Religious and truly Christian Education: and consequently a great deal of that Immorality and Prophaness, which so much abounds amongst us, must necessarily have been owing to this cause. If therefore we in earnest desire that Reformation of Manners, which so many of us profess our selves passionately concern'd for, we cannot do a better piece of service, for this end, than entirely to remove this cause of Immorality and Prophaness, out of the way. And since by the Blessing of God, there is a proper method already begun, and has been for some time successfully carry'd on, for the effecting of this, we shall be utter inexcusable, if we suffer this method to fail, for want of our Charity to Support it: nay, if we do not to the utmost of our power, encourage and improve it. When is our Money ever so wisely laid out; when will it ever turn to so good account, as when laid out for the Honour of God and our Blessed Saviour, for the increasing of Virtue, and propagating of true Religion.

*Fourthly*, This is a Charity to those, who above all others, are the properest Objects of our Charity, I mean Children. Children, whose utter incapacity to help themselves ought the more effectually to recommend them to our kindness and assistance. Children, whose spotless Innocence deserves all, that we can possibly do for its preservation. Children, whose soft and tender Tempers render them susceptible of the very best and most lasting impressions, from Virtue and Religion: Children, whose whole scene of Life is yet before them, and who therefore may be made the Instruments of doing very much good in the World. Lastly, Children, whom our Blessed Saviour has express'd so much concern, such a tender regard for, that we can hardly ever enough manifest our love of, or be careful enough for them. Mat. 19. 13. Mark 10. 16. Luke 18. 15.

Dearest Jesu! What a ravishing and transporting sight is it, to behold such little Children, as thou graciously vouchsafest to suffer to come unto thee, put into the right way of coming unto thee for ever? To behold those, whose Angels do always behold the face of God in Heaven, Mat. 18. 10. and of whom is the Kingdom of Heaven, so early and carefully train'd up in the paths of virtue and goodness; that morally speaking, they can hardly fail of becoming one day Angels themselves, and inheriting that Kingdom, which they are so well fitted for? To behold those, whose unhappy circumstances must probably have expos'd them to innumerable hazards and difficulties, wants and temptations, rescu'd by Christian Charity from

from all these: and as effectually invited and determin'd to the side of *Virtue and Religion, happiness here and hereafter*, as they were likely to have been to that of *immorality and profaneness, everlasting ruine and destruction*. O thou Dear lover of *Children*, thou Dear lover of *Souls*, what an acceptable fight must this needs be to thee? How precious in thy eyes shall all those be, who have any hand in promoting this *Glorious* this *Godlike* Work?

Lastly, This *Charity* will not fail of having its *peculiar rewards, both in this Life, and that which is to come*.

This reward we are immediately sure of in hand, that, by breeding up those to be *honest and faithful, diligent and industrious*, who before were usually the *quite contrary*: we shall not only secure our selves, from many *dangers and troubles*, which we before were expos'd to from them: but even reap *services and advantages*, in their stead. And we can have no reason to doubt, but that God will fully recompence, even in this World, all our care for the Children of *others*, by Blessings upon our *own*. Nay, and is not this a very likely way to procure a *Blessing* even upon the *Barren Womb*, and to have her made a *Joyful Mother of Children*, who shews, by her *Affectionate* concern for the Children of *others*, how well she is dispos'd to take care of her *own*, if God shall think fit to send them.

But however this may be, our reward in the *next Life* is *infallibly* certain. There He, who was a *Dear* lover of *Little Children*, will not fail particularly to *remember and reward* all our kindnesses towards them. These, we are assur'd by him who *cannot lye*, they, who have been *Instrumental* in turning many to *Righteousness*, shall shine forth in the *Kingdom of their Father*, with a distinguish'd Lustre, as *Stars for ever and ever*, Daniel 12. 3. Mat. 13. 43.

What then shall I say more to you? You have a *Glorious* opportunity of *doing good* before your Eyes: O make haste to embrace and encourage it; and be sure that the *proportion* of your *Alms* riseth up to the *worthiness* of it. Measure them not, by the stingy Custom of this World, or the Example of a *Covetous Neighbour*: but by the love of *God and Christ* to you, by the Examples of the *Apostles* and first *Christians*; by your *hopes* of Heaven, and the *greatness* of those rewards which you there expect. For, assure your selves, *he that soweth sparingly, shall reap so, and with what measure we mete, it will be measur'd to us again*, 2 Cor. 9. 6. Luke 6. 38. 1 Tim. 6. 7. Let us seriously consider, that we can *carry nothing with us* out of this World, and that onely so much, of what we have in it, will do us any good in the other, as we shall have sent thither before us in *Works of Mercy and Charity*; and that it would have been better for us never to have been rich, than to have the *rust* of our *riches* be a *Witness* against us, and eat our *Flesh* as it were fire, and bring such *miseries* upon us, as shall make us *howl and weep* everlastingly, James 5. 1. 3.

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O let us not, like the *Rich Man* in the Gospel, have all our *good things* in this life, Luke 16. 25. But let us lay up for our selves a never fading substance in *Heaven*, and make to our selves *Friends* of the *Mammon* of *Unrighteousness*, that, when we fail, they may receive us into *everlasting habitations*, Mat. 6. 20. Luke 16. 9.

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